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In Memoriam.

MARY C. BISPHAM.

FRANCIS J. HUMPHREY.

THE MIGHT OF FAITH.

"NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, AND THE EVIDENCE
OF THINGS NOT SEEN." — Heb. xi. 1.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

CHURCH AT HARRISON SQUARE, BOSTON, MASS.,

SEPT. 2, 1883,

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF WORSHIP AFTER THE FUNERALS OF MRS. MARY C. BISPHAM
AND FRANCIS J. HUMPHREY


BY THE PASTOR,

C. D. BRADLEE.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF GEO. E. TODD & CO., HARRISON SQUARE.

1883.



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From

C. D. BRADLEE.

57 *West Brookline Street,*
(BLACKSTONE SQUARE,)

Between Washington Street and Shawmut Avenue.

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Gift of

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S E R M O N.

"NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPE FOR, AND THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN." — Heb. xi. 1.

Strange that faith should be called *substance* and *evidence*, when to so many minds it seems only a probability and a guess, or, at best, an imagined assurance.

But the Christian has the highest authority for calling *faith* and *fact* one and the same thing. Now I want to try to make it plain that the Christian's faith is, after all, the only thing that is substantial, and the sole thing in behalf of which evidence can be taken without any grains of allowance.

I am aware that the people of this world to a large extent argue the other way, for we are told that what we see and handle, and what comes under the direct cognizance of the senses, and what can be called a tangible, personal, outside experience, that these

things alone are real and beyond doubt, and worthy of all acceptance and trust.

Hence the old proverb, "Seeing is believing." Our houses, and food, and coin, and trade, and ships, and all kinds of merchandise, we understand as facts, but when we are told of the soul, and Heaven, and eternity, and God, and Jesus, and the Holy Ghost, and the angels, why these, some say, are ideas and suppositions and dreams, and may or may not be true, and better be left for further consideration.

We are hungry, and must be fed; and we are naked, and must be clothed; and we are poor, and must have means of support; and we cannot live a single day if we deny the material altogether. Now all this seems like common-sense, because it chimes in with what we feel and know is our experience continually, and we are quite well aware that if the tangible things of this earth are thoroughly ignored by each and by all, in a very few days all the human race would perish.

The mistake arises, not in making the material so very important, *for it is virtually important*, or else God would never have permitted it or created it, but it arises in making the things of time antagonistic to the claims of eternity, for we constitute two powers as *rivals* that ought to be twin-sisters; nay, the one should be the mother and the other the daughter, and both should walk together hand in hand and heart with heart.

Of course, you and I must make a living, for we were ordered so to do, and Adam was placed in the world after the expulsion from the garden for that very purpose, and the beautiful movements of

the world are all made musical and holy because we each stand in our lot and take up our burden, and fall into the groove that is left for our shaping. Isaiah thus tersely expresses this truth in words like these :

“They helped everyone his neighbor, and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smoothed with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying it is ready for the soldering, and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.”

Ah, my friends, this is God's world, and we have something to do in it besides using our lips in praise or our hearts in adoration ; aye, a great deal to do with our hands, that must be nimble and busy, so that work itself shall be a chant, and industry a psalm of praise, and achievement an anthem unto God.

The preachers of old times who all the time cast shame upon the world, were quite as much to blame as those people to-day who do all they can to insult and to abuse religion. But the great point to which I would most especially call your attention at this time is, that faith rightly conceived and adopted and loved, will make the eternal realities as clear and as beautiful and as grand and as sublime as anything that seems so substantial, right before our eyes.

View with me briefly a true faith in God, and in Jesus, and in the possibilities of human nature, and in eternal life, and in retribution, and in Heaven.

He who truly believes in God has something very mighty and comforting and gracious throbbing at his heart, for he sees far away in dim space, in the mighty ages of the shadowy past, a Being perfect

in love and knowledge and justice and mercy, all alone, or perhaps attended by One who is his perfect image, his Son and our Lord ; and soon he perceives that by the orders of unerring wisdom creation springs into life, for He who was all love wanted a great many to love him ; and then too he finds that this great Being is always present in the works that he has made, informing and guiding and transforming and hallowing the smallest atom that twinkles in a beam of light or lies hid in the bed of the sea ; and he finds him, the Creator, present at every mortal's side, full of pity and gentleness and peace and power, and not a breath but he orders it, and not a beating of the pulse but allowed by his blessed goodness, and not a pang but he sent it, nor a joy but he gave it, not anything whatever of discipline but he can change it into a blessing. In other words, such a faith as this makes us see God, not with the veritable eyes of flesh, but with the hidden and glorious and uplifting sight that comes from the centre of the soul.

Again, what does a true faith in Jesus mean? Not merely a confession of his existence, and an acknowledgement of his precepts, and an admiration for his life, and a sympathy with his sufferings, and a weeping at his cross, and a curious gaze at his empty tomb, and a solemn look at the "Mount of Ascension," and a constant feeling of his holy presence. No ; more than all these things, good and grand and inspiring as they are ; for we must also submit our souls to his gracious cleansings, and to his holy visitations, and to his majestic inspiration, and to his sweet and sacred and uplifting and splendid coronation, and in everything we must endeavor to please him, the Lord, submitting thoughts and words

and deeds for his quickening and strengthening and blessed redemption. It is not fiction nor imagination merely, nor a mystic dream, when we speak of talking with Jesus and walking with him, but a sacred truth, which the renewed soul constantly and joyously feels. And with this faith gained, where does the believer stand? Why, he stands in heaven, although he walks upon the earth, and the lights of the upper land illumine all his steps, and he is bathed in glory all the time, and his face shines, and to all that meet him he carries a benediction that they know full well has fallen from the Celestial Kingdom.

Yes, my friends, this is what we mean by a Christian experience, a becoming like what the Master would have us to be; more and more like him until he is reproduced in us, as a savor of life everlasting. Again, what is the true trust in the possibilities of human nature? Here some will tell us that we are treading upon forbidden ground. Possibilities of human nature! they will exclaim; why, the talk is foolish, for it is all dark and wretched there, and nothing can be found but the taste of death.

Ah, my friends, when we have said from the heart those words, *God and Jesus*, it will not be difficult to look up the grandeur of our natures *as God intended they should be*, and as Jesus wants to make them, and as we have the power of making them, the help of all Heaven being on our side.

I do not say that the human nature can ever become the Divine nature, but I do say, nay, more, the Bible says, that it can become perfect in its own degree, and in its own power, and so a live faith

ought to lead us daily to expect, and so every hour ought we to try to bring the blessed consummation about.

Self-culture, as it is generally presented, *is a pretty poor sort of a thing*, because the Almighty lever is generally left out, and I am sick of hearing men tell us to climb to the Alps of goodness by our own unaided strength; and for my part I frankly confess that I cannot climb that great mountain all by myself, for it is too high, and it is too steep, and I am too tired and too sick and too worn, and I have not the courage, and I should break right down after the first few steps and I want some help, and if I ask for help what do the believers in themselves tell me to do, and what will they give me for help? Will they give me a staff? No, they say, walk on your own feet, take your own eyes and hands with you, and it will be enough. Have courage and patience and pride, they cry out, and you will succeed. Ah, such advice is all hollow mockery, and I will not go if I must go alone. Yet, Christians, those Alpine heights can be reached by our own natures, if striven for in the only right way, for you and I are ordained to accomplish something grand, and we must believe this, and we must strive after these mighty things, but we must take Jesus with us and then all will be well.

Once more, we must have a real faith in eternal life. This too is a very difficult truth even for some pretty ripe saints to fully understand and master, for there is something about what we call death that does for a long while seem to be the real end of everything, and yet a deeper consciousness will show to us that decay has not touched anything of that which we really knew. The eyes

are closed ! Yes, but the light that was in them has gone to brighten up the spiritual body. The expression is gone ! Yes, but it is stamping itself again in its new covering. The mouth is closed and still ! Yes, but the voice goes on through lips that shall be eternal. The body is marble ! Yes, but the spiritual body has been saved ; that can never get cold and never change and never suffer ; that is consecrated in the garden of Heaven. Take any friend that you know. Is it the eye itself that pleases you, or something that beams through the eye ? Is it the face you like, or something that makes the face smile ? Do those lips themselves make the words that are so precious, or is it a *somebody behind the lips* that gives out the voice ?

The more we study this inner man, the more and ever the more will the immortality of the soul be made clear and the more clear, to our waiting vision. Eternal life ! Well, is that really so difficult a problem when we look at this present life ? Why did God create us unless it were for a forever ?

Letting alone the Scriptural assurances, that to believers place immortality beyond a doubt, is not the very fact of birth, with the consciousness of everlastingness, *a bond of the Almighty that will be honored at the Eternal Throne ?*

Ah, even here our faith may become *evidence* and *substance*, such as can never be shaken, ever blossoming into greater beauty and glory as time rolls on. Glory be to God !

Again, retribution becomes a fact to a vital faith, that is, he that sows must reap. Reap forever ? Yes, if he sows forever, but

if he stops sowing, I leave him with the grace of the God, who, through Jesus, told us the "Parable of the Prodigal Son."

Who are the best people? Those who obliterate consequences altogether, or those who constantly maintain that every error meets with its just recompense, and where would our present society be, if we should annihilate results?

Suppose the thief might steal as he pleased, and no throb at his heart, and no sheriff at his side. Suppose the murderer had full license to do his bloody work, and no reproach inwardly, or outwardly, and so on, where should we be then?

So, too, if on the other side, in God's city, there be no distinction of persons, and Saint Paul and Judas shake hands at once, what will become of the words *right* and *wrong*, and where will be the eternal conscience?

Ah, the true soul sees recompense on the bad, as well as the good side. There may be a restoration and there may be a re-awakening, and our soul may be revived, yet ever sin brings pain, and transgression sorrow, whilst penitence steps in as the relief and the healing. And Heaven, too, becomes to the sound faith all the more grand and sublime day by day, and hour by hour, for it is the place of comfort, and of rest, and of benediction, and of service, and of praise, and of love, and of growth, and of true joy, and it is the region of all who want to be holy, and the home for every believer's soul.

As Elim sweetly says:

"Hark the sound of holy voices,
 Chanting at the crystal sea,
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Alleluia! Lord to Thee!
 Multitude which none can number,
 Like the stars in glory stands,
 Clothed in white apparel, holding
 Palms of victory in their hands.

"Patriarch, and holy prophet,
 Who prepared the way of Christ,
 King, apostle, saint, and martyr,
 Confessor, evangelist,
 Saintly maiden, godly matron,
 Widows who have watched to prayer,
 Joined in holy concert, singing
 To the Lord of all, are there.

"Now they reign in Heavenly glory,
 Now they walk in golden light,
 Now they drink as from a river,
 Holy bliss and infinite;
 Love and peace they taste forever,
 And all truth and knowledge see,
 In the beatific vision
 Of the Father, and of Thee."

Faith is the *evidence*, and faith is the *substance* of all things beautiful and good, both in time and in eternity, and can be obtained in all its massive glory, if sought after by the aid of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the lesson that I would our souls should receive this day and forever.

We are naturally led by these thoughts to the trials that have fallen upon our path since we last met in this church, trials that can only be explained, cured and crowned through the power of a blessed faith. We have stood by the cold forms of two of our well known friends, benefactors of this church, and have uttered the last words, and have parted with the mortal shape forever, and yet we have faith to believe that sad as has been the discipline for us, "it is well with them." They have gone through with that which all must greet; they have become immortal; their pains and weakness and trials have ended; they are now being educated in the school of Heaven; they now stand before God; have seen the Lord Jesus Christ; have clasped the hands of angels once well known upon the earth; have found their spiritual mansion; known the mysteries, the splendors, the opportunities, the comforts of the spiritual life! Yes,—

"It is well with them; but who can tell
What the future, veiled in thick darkness,
Brings to us?"

July 2d, the day after our last service in the church, we gathered together in the house once made so bright by the presence of, and now glorified by the celestial guardianship of one whom we all loved, trusted, sacredly remember, and oh, so sharply miss!

Mrs. Mary C. Bispham had a character that we rarely find equalled, because that character was made up of opposite traits not often brought into fellowship. She was courageous, but gentle; full of enthusiasm, but full of prudence; ready for the pleasures

of life where she felt duty called, but never forgetting in her happiest moments her constant obligations to God ; by nature, wonderfully industrious, and yet, when prostrated by sickness, and rendered incapable of activity, strangely and beautifully patient ; desirous of a long life, and yet, when the voice said, "Come," "fearing no evil," and willing, ay, glad to go, if such were the decree ; firm in her decision, clear in her judgment, of superior executive ability, yet ready to hear all sides, to balance probabilities and possibilities, and bearing no ill will to those who equally honest and true and good could not think as she thought. Peculiarly affectionate and grateful and conscientious, and even in her extreme agony, thinking of everybody and everything so lovingly as to astonish all who witnessed such a complete self-forgetfulness. Brave as she was all through life, so busy, so self-sacrificing, so thoroughly religious, and yet so unassuming, she yet, in her last days, gave out even sweeter music, made her sick-chamber a cathedral, and uplifted and glorified everybody who took her by the hand.

In a ministry of nearly twenty-nine years I have visited a very large number of those whose earthly doom was sealed ; I have seen wonderful submission, beautiful patience, sublime courage, and heaven and earth almost united, but with all this blessed experience, in this new sickness I found something equal, aye, superior to anything I had previously witnessed.

Many can view seeming death calmly ; can look up to God's city without a fear ; can say farewell with no trembling of the lips ; can give general directions to friends as to what shall be done when

the end shall be met; but who, tell me, can look the physician unflinchingly in the face, and for the sake of science, for the sake of serving others, for the sake of answering the ten-thousand questions of dear ones, can give orders for such a search for the cause of disease, as shall set, *if possible*, all queries at rest? Only a thoroughly spiritual heroine could do that!

Again, I say, the character was remarkable; the memory of it is blessed; and the loss that has fallen upon us all can never be fully made up!

During our vacation also another member of this society has passed unto God, an aged man who had lived more than the promised threescore years and ten, and yet one who, until his last sickness, and even all through that sickness, was loving in heart, strong in mind, and with a body wonderful for activity and grace and beauty.

Our friend was always at church when well, and he filled these sacred spaces around us with a voice of praise that cheered our hearts and hallowed our souls.

You all know to whom I refer, you can see him now, with the aid of imagination, in his pew, with his white hair, his striking face, his remarkable form, his bright eye, his quick movement, his wonderful dignity allied to a child-like simplicity and his pleasant expression!

You all remember how cordial his manner; how generous his hand; how genial his heart. Francis J. Humphrey was born May 17, 1812, and passed into Heaven, Thursday evening, August 9th, a little over seventy-one years of age, and but little exceeding eight

years by date, a trial, the greatest trial he ever met, the departure of his wife unto God !

In one of the most splendid mansions of this part of the city, a house built by his order, and planned by his companion, he passed seventeen years of his life in study and recreation, blessing very many of his days by deeds of great benevolence, and loving to make others happy out of the abundance that was placed into his keeping.

He graduated from Harvard University in 1832, in a class that has given to the world many, very many minds of greatness and power, and it is but justice to him to say, that he stood well up to them all in natural gifts, and that he could have surpassed them all had he so chosen, had his courage equalled his ability, and his ambition been married to his skill, we then should have said, not only Abbott, Bellows, Brooks, Mason, Osgood, Page, Thacher, True, Wheatland, Worcester and others, but quite as well, Humphrey, and perhaps *first of all*, Humphrey.

He preferred, however, a more quiet life, and silently he passed his days, even unto the end ; and now that he has crossed the river, we leave him trustingly to his God, and cherish his memory sweetly forever.

Gone from our sight; alive with God;
We bow our heads, and take the rod;
Great is our loss, but sure thy gain;
And faith will make the message plain.

Full ripe in years, and kind of heart;
Thou didst great joy and peace impart;

And many, by thy giving hand,
Did shelter find, and food command.

At church, when health allowed the grace,
Was seen thy noble, loving face;
Was heard thy strong and striking voice
That made us all in love rejoice!

In sickness, too, thy patience sure,
Made all, in faith, the blow endure;
And when the call at last did come,
We know you found another home.

Another home, above, in Heaven,
Where loved and lost again were given;
Where all is clear and sound and bright,
And clouds are conquered by the light.

